

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 ACDA-19 IO-14 SAM-01 DRC-01 /153 W

----- 021469

R 091350Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8271

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T CAIRO 6016

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, LY

SUBJECT: EGYPT VERSUS LIBYA

REF: A. TRIPOLI 869; B. USDAO CAIRO 0472 AUG. 74 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: SADAT'S LETER TO RCC WHICH, CAIRO PRESS REPORTS, LIBYAN RCC MEMBERS ALLEGE THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED, SIGNED NEW LOW IN TRIPOLI/CAIRO RELATIONS. AMONG FACTS AND RUMORS CIRCULATING HERE CONCERNING ALLEGED EGYPTIAN STEPS SCHEDULED FOR NEAR FUTURE, MOST IMPORTANT IS REPORT THAT TWO EGYPTIAN NAVY VESSELS ARE "HOSTAGES" TO LIBYANS IN TOBRUK. DO NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT PARTIAL CALL-UP OF EGYPTIAN NAVY MAY BE RELATED TO TOBRUK SITUATION, BUT CALL-UP MAY SIMPLY BE ROUTINE MILITARY EXERCISE AND/OR DELIBERATELY LOW KEY REACTION TO GENERAL GUR'S RECENT STATEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MAJOR IRRITANTS TO GOE/GOL AMITY WHICH, ACCORDING TO CAIRO, HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED BY LIBYAN SIDE DURING PAST WEEKS. TWO FURTHER ALLEGED PROVOCATIONS HAVE COME TO OUR ATTENTION. FIRST, EGYPTIANS SEEM TO BE ANNOYED

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BY "SAWT AL-WATAN AL-ARABI" WHICH, WE ARE TOLD, COMES ON

REGULAR TRIPOLI RADIO FREQUENCY AT MIDNIGHT AND BROADCASTS FOR ABOUT THREE HOURS IN BOMBASTIC, PAN-ARAB STYLE REMINISCENT OF AHMAD SA'ID'S TENURE AT SAWT AL-ARAB, WITH ADDED ANTI-SADAT FLAVOR. BUT MORE IMPORTANT IS REPORT WHICH CANADIAN EMBASSY TELLS US THEY HAVE CONFIRMED CONCERNING VIREEL DETENTION OF TWO EGYPTIAN NAVY VESSELS. ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO, ACCORDING TO STORY, TWO EGYPTIAN WARSHIPS STATIONED IN TOBRUK ENDEAVORED TO RESUPPLY THEIR AMMUNITION STOCKS FROM PORT STORAGE AREAS. LIBYANS REFUSED PERMISSION. EGYPTIAN COMMANDER REQUESTED PERMISSION FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS TO TAKE AMMUNITION BY FORCE. PERMISSION WAS REFUSED AND SHIP WAS ORDERED TO DEPART TOBRUK IMMEDIATELY. LIBYAN PORT GUNS, HOWEVER, WERE TRAINED ON BOTH SHIPS AND COMMANDER WAS INFORMED BY LIBYANS THAT PERMISSION TO DEPART HAD BEEN DENIED. CANADIANS UNDERSTAND BOTH SHIPS ARE STILL AT TOBRUK IN SIGHTS OF LIBYAN GUNS. (COMMENT: COULD THIS BE QUID PRO QUO FOR MIRAGES?)

2. LATEST ANTI-LIBYAN PRESS STORY IS CARRIED BY AUGUST 9 CAIRO NEWSPAPERS WHICH CLAIM TRIPOLI RADIO ALLEGED AUGUST 8 THAT LIBYAN RCC MEMBERS REFUSED TO ACCEPT SADAT'S MESSAGE SINCE "IT WAS PUBLISHED BEFORE DELIVERY". REFUTING THESE ALLEGATIONS, "RESPONSIBLE EGYPTIAN SOURCE" IS QUOTED AS SAYING MESSAGE WAS DELIVERED "LAST MONDAY", TWO DAYS BEFORE IT WAS PUBLISHED, AND THAT CAIRO HAS RECEIVED OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF RECEIPT, TOGETHER WITH COMMENT BY QADHAAFI "IGNORING RCC" AND SAYING "LIBYA HAS ONLY ONE PRESIDENT". THUS IT WAS, PRESS ACCOUNTS CONTINUE, THAT RCC MEMBERS LEARNED OF MESSAGE ONLY AFTER PUBLICATION. QADHAAFI DID NOT GIVE IT TO THEM, IN ORDER TO "PREVENT THEM FROM LEARNING TRUTH AND FROM EXERCISING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES..." PRESS LEAVES DEFINITION OF THESE "RESPONSIBILITIES" TO THE READER.

3. WHAT EGYPTIANS WILL DO NEXT, IS MOOT QUESTION. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT CAIRO POLICE ARE CRACKING DOWN ON ERRANT LIBYAN DRIVERS AND DEALING STRICTLY WITH LIBYANS WHO DISTURB THE PEACE AT CAIRO NIGHT CLUBS. THIS, OF COURSE, CAN ONLY BE ON THE ORDER OF MININT MAMDUH SALIM WHO, WE UNDERSTAND, HAS BEEN GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEALING WITH LIBYAN AFFAIRS. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORT FROM GOOD SOURCE THAT DECISION REPORTED IN CAIRO 5824 TO PERMIT CONTRACTS OF EGYPTIANS WORKING IN LIBYA TO BE RENEWED FOR

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A MAXIMUM OF FOUR YEARS MAY BE REVISED TO PERMIT MAXIMUM OF ONLY TWO YEARS. MOST EGYPTIAN TEACHERS ARE "SECONDED" AND WOULD THEREFORE BE AFFECTED. IN OTHER WORDS, ANY EGYPTIAN TEACHER WHO HAS ALREADY SPENT TWO YEARS WORKING IN LIBYA WOULD NOT BE GIVEN PERMISSION TO RETURN WHEN SCHOOL OPENS. A SECOND RUMOR CIRCULATING IN CAIRO IS THAT EGYPTIAN MISSION IN TRIPOLI HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO "ADVISE" FAMILIES OF RESIDENT EGYPTIANS TO RETURN HOME SO AS TO AVOID ILL TREATMENT.

4. AS EMBASSY TRIPOLI POINTS OUT, RECALL OF KEY CATEGORIES OF EGYPTIANS COULD PARALYZE IMPORTANT SECTORS OF LIBYAN GOVERNMENT. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, CANADIAN CHARGE TELLS US THAT CZECH MILATT REMARKED RECENTLY TO HIM THAT LIBYANS HAVE FORMALLY REQUESTED "HUNDREDS" OF TECHNICIANS WHICH PRAGUE HAS DECLINED TO SUPPLY.

5. AS REPORTED REF B, RUMORS ABOUND IN CAIRO THAT THERE HAS BE A PARTIAL CALL-UP IN ALL ARMED SERVICES. THESE RUMORS ARE, WE BELIEVE, TRUE. DATT IS INCLINED TO THE VIEW THAT NAVY CALL-UP MAY BE CONNECTED WITH DETENTION OF EGYPTIAN SHIPS IN TOBRUK (PARA 1 ABOVE), BUT WE DO NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS IS ROUTINE MILITARY EXERCISE AND/OR DELIBERATELY LOW KEY DEFENSEIVE REACTION TO GENERAL GUR'S RECENT PREEMPTIVE STRIKE STATEMENT.

6. UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT PROVIDING COMIC RELIEF IS AUGUST 9 CAIRO PRESS STORY THAT SHAIKH ZAYID HAS OFFERED TO MEDIATE PERSONALLY THE EGYPTIAN-LIBYAN CRISIS "FROM WHICH ONLY ENEMIES OF ARABS CAN BENEFIT". REPORTEDLY ZAYID SENT HIS FOREIGN MINISTER TO ALEXANDRIA BY PRIVATE PLANE TO DELIVER MESSAGE TO SADAT, WHO, PAPERS SAY, EXPLAINED GOE'S VIEW OF "CERTAIN ACTS" BY QADHAAFI WHICH HAVE NOT YET BEEN MADE PUBLIC. COMMENT: WE DO NOT BELIEVE SADAT IS IN MARKET FOR A MEDIATOR; SHOULD HE CHANGE HIS MIND, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY HE WILL ASK ZAYID TO FULFILL THAT FUNCTION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, AMITY, RADIO BROADCASTING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974CAIRO06016
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740219-0050
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740861/aaaacank.tel
Line Count: 141
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A. TRIPOLI 869; B. USDAO CAIRO 0472, AUG. 74 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <13-Aug-2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EGYPT VERSUS LIBYA
TAGS: PFOR, EG, LY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005